59

MABRAY JOYCE A 12/30/81 084348 PRINTER: LI
80 MOSCOW 94

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
PAGE 01 MOSCOW 00094 031350Z
ACTION EURE-12
INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 NEA-06 SMS-01 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 HA-05 088 W
----------005536 031413Z /41

O 031340Z JAN 80
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6034
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MOSCOW 00094
E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, UR, AF
SUBJECT: USSR FIRST DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER (MVD)
PAPUTIN DIES - IN AFGHANISTAN?

1. (U) JANUARY 3 PRAVDA CARRIES OBITUARY FOR VIKTOR SEMENOVICH PAPUTIN, MVD LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND FIRST DEPUTY MINISTER, WHO IS REPORTED TO HAVE DIED ON DECEMBER 28 AT THE AGE OF 54. OBITUARY IS COMPLETELY - AND UNUSUALLY - SILENT ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING PAPUTIN'S DEATH. THE OFFICIAL AFGHAN PRESS PLACED PAPUTIN IN KABUL ON DECEMBER 2, WHEN HE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE MET WITH THE NOW DEPOSED AMIN. WE DO NOT RECALL A REFERENCE TO PAPUTIN IN THE SOVIET PRESS IN RECENT WEEKS.

2. (LOU) A PLAUSIBLE LINE OF SPECULATION IS THAT PAPUTIN DIED DURING THE SOVIET AFGHAN TAKEOVER AND OVERTHROW OF AMIN. PRAVDA'S SIX-DAY DELAY IN REPORTING HIS DEATH MAY HAVE BEEN PART OF A CONCERTED EFFORT TO BLUR THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PAPUTIN AND AFGHANISTAN. PLACEMENT OF THE OBITUARY ON PAGE SIX (THE BACK PAGE), OMISSION OF A PHOTOGRAPH OF PAPUTIN (A FEATURE OF ALL OBITUARIES OF DEPUTY AND FIRST DEPUTY MINISTERS IN OUR FILES FOR THE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
PAGE 02 MOSCOW 00094 031350Z

PAST YEAR), AS WELL AS THE UNUSUAL LACK OF ANY SIGNATURES FROM FULL MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO (IN STRIKING CONTRAST WITH THE TREATMENT ACCORDED MVD LIEUTENANT GENERAL, BUT ONLY DEPUTY MINISTER NIKITIN, REPORTED ON PAGE THREE IN PRAVDA FOR AUGUST 7, 1979, ALONG WITH A PHOTOGRAPH AND THE SIGNATURES OF NINE FULL MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO, INCLUDING BREZHNEV) ALL MAY BE PART OF THIS EFFORT.

3. (LOU) WE MIGHT NOTE THAT WHILE PAPUTIN'S OBITUARY MENTIONS HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRENGTHENING OF LAW AND ORDER IN SOVIET SOCIETY, HE HAS ALSO SERVED ON OCCASION AS A SPOKESMAN ON EMIGRATION MATTERS. THIS PAST AUGUST, FOR EXAMPLE, IN MEETINGS WITH CODEL WOLFF, PAPUTIN SPOKE ON EMIGRATION, IMPRISONED HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST SHCHARANSKY'S HEALTH, AN EXIT VISA FOR PROMINENT REFUSE-NIK LERNER, AND THE PENTECOSTALISTS RESIDING IN OUR

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE

EMBASSY. GARRISON
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE